

"BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER"
The Battle of Front Royal
Driving Tour

Foes in War, Friends in Peace



Col. Bradley T. Johnson Belle Boyd Col. John R. Kenly
First Maryland, CSA "Siren of the South" First Maryland, USA

Battle of Front Royal May 23, 1862
Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862

"If the Valley is lost, Virginia is lost."

Those were the words of General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson in the early spring of 1862 describing his responsibility as the Commander of Confederate forces in the Shenandoah Valley. It was widely believed that if Virginia was lost, the Confederacy would perish. The Valley was a vital strategic import to both sides, and the politicians in Washington as well as Richmond were intensely aware of that fact.

Keeping the Shenandoah for the Confederacy and exploiting it as a threat to the Union would be Jackson's mission for the next few months of his life. The campaign was basically a grueling series of maneuvers in which Jackson, driving his men until their feet bled, led the Federals on one wild-goose chase after another. In one period of 48 days on the march, his men covered 646 miles.

Yet for the very reason that it succeeded brilliantly without costly battles, the Valley Campaign enshrined Jackson as one of history's great military commanders. It demonstrated dramatically the powerful strategic influence that small armies, operating on the enemy's flank and threatening his rear, can exert on major theaters of war. The shattering blows delivered by Jackson in the Valley had the effect of temporarily paralyzing the 120,000 Federals General McClellan was preparing to send against Richmond and eventually diverting over 40,000 troops from the Richmond offensive. Thanks largely to this diversion, the Confederacy's Capital and vital communications center were saved.

"Stonewall's" Valley Campaign would start with a defeat at Kernstown in March that forced Jackson up the Valley. On May 8, 1862 Jackson's troops attacked and defeated the Union Forces at McDowell, west of Staunton. In mid-May, the Union Forces under the command of General Nathaniel Banks controlled the Northern Valley with a strong defensive position at Strasburg and his supply base anchored in Winchester. To cover his left flank, Banks sent 1,000 men under the command of Col. John R. Kenly to Front Royal. This force was also ordered to guard the railroad and the bridges over the North and South Forks of the Shenandoah River, north of Front Royal. Jackson, unlike Banks, knew that the Luray Valley's key city of Front Royal was completely indefensible. Jackson's plan was to seize Front Royal with such speed as to gobble up Kenly's men and prevent any warning from reaching Banks.

Friday, May 23, 1862 was clear and intensely hot. Early in the afternoon, Kenly's Marylanders were seeking cool relief from the sun's rays when suddenly from the forests emerged long gray lines of men and a deadly explosion of musketry. Leading these Southern troops was Col. Bradley T. Johnson and the First Maryland, CSA. This was the start of the Battle of Front Royal or as history will record it: The Battle of "BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER." The outcome of this battle would dictate "Stonewall" Jackson's next move.



- 1.) Follow the Virginia Civil War Trails Signs.
- 2.) Respect Private Property.
- 3.) Two Stops are at active Churches. Please respect their privacy during Services.
- 4.) Prospect Hill Cemetery: Be considerate during Funeral Services.
- 5.) Use caution at some Stops, you will be leaving hard surface roads and traveling on gravel roads.
- 6.) At a couple of Stops you will be on the Banks of the Shenandoah River: Keep a watchful eye that young visitors do not get too close to the water. This also applies to adults.
- 7.) Please report any concerns to the Visitors Center.

Our starting point is the Visitors Center, located at the historic train station, on East Main Street. Using the Virginia Civil War Trails Signs, located in front of the Visitors Center, will provide an orientation of the Battle. The Driving Tour is approximately 16 miles long. Please allow three hours to complete the tour.

If you were using this route in 1862, you would be passing through the Federal troops stationed in town and their advanced pickets just south of town.

At 8:00 A.M. on Friday, May 23rd, 1862 the Confederate advance halted here.

We leave Asbury Church by turning right on Route 340 South and make an immediate left onto Rocky Lane, a gravel road. Follow Rocky Lane for 1½ miles until it intersects with Browntown Road. Turn left on Browntown Road and go 1.8 miles to the next Stop.

With total concealment from the Federal pickets, Jackson halts his army here about one and a half miles from the village. From here Jackson ordered his troops into battle formations.

This map illustrates the Shenandoah River region, highlighting the North Fork and South Fork. Key features include:

- Rivers:** Shenandoah River, North Fork, South Fork.
- Roads:** Route 340, Route 622, N. Shenandoah Ave., Royal Ave., Commerce Ave., Main St., Linn Ave., Prospect St., South St., Cruser Rd.
- Landmarks:** Guard Hill, The Bridges, Richardson's Hill, Rose Hill, Bel Air, Visitor Center, Court House, Prospect Hill Cemetery, Belle Boyd.
- Directions:** Arrows point 'To Fairview' (northeast) and 'To Asbury Chapel' (southwest).

The "Wise Troop" quickly rode forward capturing the Union picket line without a shot being fired. The Federal Company of Marylanders stationed around the courthouse was completely unaware of the Southern advance.

We will proceed back on Browntown Road by making a left. Follow it until it intersects with Route 340. Turn right, heading towards town, and go through two stoplights. Make your first left onto Prospect Street. Follow this street into the cemetery. 1.5 miles to Stop 3

★ STOP 3: PROSPECT HILL CEMETERY

Here is a good vantagepoint. When the Confederate artillery reached this elevation, they could see the whole field of combat. By the time the artillery unlimbered, it was going on 3:30 P.M. and the battle had progressed through the town. These Southern cannons would have no role in the battle from this position. Local lore states that Gen. Jackson witnessed part of the battle from here.

Leaving the cemetery, stay on Prospect Street and make a left onto Route 340 or Royal Avenue. Make a right at the second stoplight, E. Main Street. Once you turn pull off immediately to the parking spots in front of the Courthouse to Stop 4. .5 miles

★ STOP 4: THE COURTHOUSE

The action around the Courthouse and through the town would be unique in the annals of the Civil War. It would be one of only a few battles during the War that was fought street by street and building by building. This battle was also rare in that it was fought by troops on both sides from the state of Maryland. The honor of Maryland was at stake with the outcome of this battle.

Continue down E. Main Street. After passing the Visitors Center make your first left on Water Street. Follow Water Street to stoplight. Make a left at the stoplight (Commerce Avenue) and an immediate right at next stoplight and follow this street straight ahead to Stop 5. (Next to LeHew Well Drilling Company). .5 miles

★ STOP 5: BEL AIR

"There was heard the quick, sharp report of a rifle," Lucy Buck recorded in her diary, "and another and another in rapid succession. Going to the door we saw the Yankees scampering over the meadow below our house and were at a loss how to account for such evident excitement on their part until presently Miss B. White rushed in with purple face and disheveled hair crying - 'Oh my God! The Southern Army is upon them - the hill above town is black with our boys!'"

Today, we are indebted to Lucy Buck of Bel Air for her devotion in recording the local history of those four tragic years in her diary.

Leaving Bel Air, turn right onto Commerce Avenue and stay in your right lane for .9 miles. Turn right on Warren Avenue to Stop 6.

★ STOP 6: ROSE HILL

We are located at the foot of Richardson's Hill, the defensive position of Col. Kenly and near the location of

the protective stone wall that ran from Happy Creek on the east towards Rose Hill on the west.

Directly ahead stands Rose Hill, the home of the delicate widow Richardson and her three young daughters. Her only son, William, had been mortally wounded at Williamsburg but a few weeks before the Battle of Front Royal.

After the battle, Sue Richardson records in her diary, "We all worked hard and fed hundreds of soldiers that night...there was scarcely a spot in our house where there was not a bed or soldiers lying on the floor. Several wounded and many sick were brought in."

Turn right back onto Commerce Avenue and turn right at the stoplight (North Royal Avenue). Follow this road and turn right at North Royal Avenue to Stop 7. .5 miles

★ STOP 7: RICHARDSON'S HILL

You can feel yourself climbing in elevation as you leave the last stop. You are ascending the hill where the Union forces made their defensive stand against the advancing Confederates.

Kenly with his back to the South Fork made a gallant effort to hold back Jackson's forces and to delay the Confederates as long as he could to allow time for Gen. Banks to withdraw from Strasburg. Even at this time Banks was not convinced that this was Jackson's Army but a cavalry demonstration. Banks still believed that Jackson was south of New Market in the Main Valley.

Stay on N. Royal Avenue for .3 miles to Stop 8.

★ STOP 8: THE BRIDGES

At this Stop you are standing in the middle of the old road that ran to Winchester in 1862. As Jackson's troops arrived here, they could see smoke and fire from the burning bridges. This would slow down the Confederate advance but would not stop it.

Today you can still see the old bridge embankments in the river that was there during the War.

Upon leaving this site you will go under the Railroad Bridge on N. Royal Avenue and turn right onto 18th Street. Follow this street until you intersect Shenandoah Avenue (Route 340/522). Turn right and continue until you have crossed both bridges. After the second bridge make your first right and follow it down to the North Fork Boat Landing and Stop 9. 1.6 miles

★ STOP 9: GUARD HILL

From this location you can see the high ground of Guard Hill and Dr. Kenner's Home to the northwest and behind you the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. You will notice the bridge embankment in the river and directly on the other side of the river you can still see the old road running up the hillside parallel to the river. This Stop has a beautiful and scenic panoramic view.

Retracing your drive from this Stop to Route 340/522, turn right onto the highway. Stay on Route 340/522 in the left lane for 2.2 miles. Turn left on Reliance Road and make an immediate right to Stop 10. This will be the final Stop of the Battle of Front Royal Driving Tour.

★ STOP 10: FAIRVIEW

Col. Kenly and his retreating army would have marched past this area in a hurry around 6:00 P.M. on their way north to Winchester and safety. Following closely behind the Federals would have been Flournoy's 6th Virginia Cavalry.

Kenly would only make it another mile from here before the Southern Troopers would catch him and the remainder of his command. This would have occurred just south of Fairview, the Home of Thomas McKay. Fairview is on the east side of the turnpike. The Battle of Front Royal would end at Fairview. With Kenly defeated, Banks in Strasburg would finally realize that Jackson was on his left flank. Gen. Banks states in his official report, "Later in the evening dispatches from fugitives who had escaped to Winchester informed us that Kenly's force had been destroyed." Upon this news, Gen. Banks immediately issues orders for his army to withdraw from Strasburg to Winchester.

It is 4.8 miles back to the Visitors Center.

The Battle of Front Royal Tour Committee was appointed by the Mayor and Town Council of Front Royal in December of 2000 to design a historically accurate Driving Tour of the Battle, including a Guide Book.

The nationally recognized Virginia Civil War Trails "Adopt-a-Sign" program designed these durable multi-colored signs which will familiarize the visitors with a summary and map of the action that occurred at each stop along the Tour. You will be able to drive on many of the roads today that existed in 1862. When you have completed the Tour, you will definitely go away with a greater understanding of the Battle of Front Royal.

The Guide Book will not only be helpful with the Driving Tour but will be a fresh, detailed reference of the Battle, a text that will benefit any Civil War library. It will contain detailed maps, complete with a time-line of the Battle and photographs that haven't been in print for many years. This will be a true treasure. The Guide Book will be available Spring 2002.

On behalf of the Mayor and the Town Council of Front Royal, we hope you have enjoyed the Battle of Front Royal Driving Tour.

For more information contact the Visitors Center at

1-800-338-2576 or 540-635-5788

E-mail: visitfr@shentel.net

VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LOVERS

Shenandoah
Valley

FOLLOW
THIS SIGN
TO ALL
BATTLE OF
FRONT ROYAL
SITES



VIRGINIA
CIVIL WAR
TRAILS

